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Ouachita receives Gold Status credential, national recognition from the American College of Sports Medicine

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OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita receives Gold Status credential, national recognition from the American College of Sports Medicine

By Mercedes Mata

May 3, 2019

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208



ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University recently received the credential of Gold Status from the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) for its Department of Kinesiology and Leisure Studies' participation and excellence in the organization's Exercise Is Medicine® (EIM) program. In addition to the national recognition, the department also secured a mini-grant of \$1,000 from Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield's Blue & You Foundation to support the campus program.

This is the first time Ouachita has received Gold Status from ACSM – the largest sports medicine and exercise science organization in the world – for its Exercise is Medicine On Campus program, but it is Ouachita's third credential. Last fall, the department was awarded Silver Status for the second time, following its first Silver Status recognition by ACSM in 2016.

The Exercise Is Medicine program is a global health initiative managed by ACSM that emphasizes the importance of including physical activity in treatment plans and referring patients to both evidence-based exercise programs and qualified professionals.

"Our culture in America is focused on sickness, not wellness," said Dr. DeWitt, professor of kinesiology and leisure studies. "You're sick, so you go to the doctor and do what he tells you. You take medicine and then go about your day.

"Our mindset [with the Exercise is Medicine program] is trying to change the culture," he continued. "We are trying to get physicians to prescribe exercise. It will extend people's lives, but also enhance the quality of their lives."

In order to meet credential status, Ouachita's program is implemented both on and off-campus. The Department of Kinesiology and Leisure Studies typically hosts a community outreach event in the fall during a home basketball or volleyball game to promote a healthy lifestyle, and community members have

the opportunity to visit stations and learn about exercise and diet or to take a brief health assessment. Ouachita also partners with a local elementary school to offer an organized recess to second and third graders.

"We offer jump ropes, basketball, hula hoops and play Simon Says and four-square. We even have a nutrition segment to talk about the foods [the kids] eat," DeWitt said. "They round-robin to each station for the entire recess. We've gotten great feedback from the teachers – and even the principal – so we've made an impact."

The department built on its earlier credentials to earn Gold Status by incorporating an exercise and obesity question into the campus nurse's health history form so that obesity could be identified as a factor prior to treatment.

Another step Ouachita has taken to promote wellness education and exercise in the Arkadelphia community is communicating with local healthcare providers, inviting them to send some of their obese patients who have having difficulties with their health to the department's community outreach lab.

"What we are doing is incorporating real people with real problems in the real world – some on campus, some off – into our wellness program," DeWitt said.

With the newly awarded mini-grant from the Blue & You Foundation, the Department of Kinesiology and Leisure studies plans to further promote the Exercise Is Medicine program. Promotional materials will include a brochure coordinated with Ouachita's Office of Recreational Life about physical activities offered on campus and another brochure about Ouachita's community outreach lab, among other things.

"I think this grant is going to take us to the next level," DeWitt said. "So now, thanks to the Blue & You Foundation, we're going to make some signage and increase the awareness of wellness. That magic pill? We found it. ... This is what kinesiology is all about: physical well-being."

Ouachita will be recognized for its Gold Status certification at the ACSM national conference, held in Orlando, Fla., in May 2019.

For more information, contact Dr. Terry DeWitt at dewittt@obu.edu or (870) 245-5264.

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